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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KCOR](#) [KCRM](#) [BU](#)  
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR DEA ADMINISTRATOR

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Alex Karagiannis for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Your visit comes as the Bulgarians brace themselves for the European Commission's monitoring report on July 23, which is expected to be highly critical of Bulgaria's performance in rule of law. In 2007, the Bulgarians improved their law enforcement capabilities and customs services, and maintained the rate of seizures, while fighting illegal drug production. These successes were overshadowed in 2007 and 2008 by a series of Interior Ministry scandals that have eroded public confidence and Bulgaria's reputation. The new, honest Interior Minister, Mihail Mikov, has turned to us for assistance as he reforms this troubled ministry. Our message is that we want an Interior Ministry that we can trust; we stand ready to support them, keyed to their ability to absorb assistance and effectively use training. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) Bulgaria continues to be primarily a drug transit country and, to a lesser extent, a producer of narcotics. On Balkan transit routes, Bulgaria is vulnerable to illegal flows of drugs, people, contraband and money. Heroin moves through Bulgaria from Southwest Asia, while chemicals used for making heroin move through Bulgaria from the former Yugoslavia to Turkey and beyond. Organized crime groups, which have operated openly in Bulgaria in the past, are moving into legitimate business operations or even slowly legitimizing themselves, making it difficult to trace the origins of their wealth. Recent scandals have highlighted the ties between these shady businessmen and some government officials.

¶3. (SBU) In April 2008, Bulgaria was shaken by a series of Interior Ministry (MOI) scandals, culminating with the ouster of Interior Minister Rumen Petkov. The scandal started when wiretapped conversations leaked to the public implicated the deputy head of the MOI's organized crime unit in giving information to shady businessmen to thwart investigations against them. The MOI's former chief operating officer, Gen. Ilia Iliev, resigned after the infamous "Kujovich affair," claiming he had been "tricked" into allowing the issuance of Bulgarian identity documents to notorious Serbian drug dealer Budimir Kujovich. Iliev was detained four months later for abuse of power and obstruction of justice while in office. The scandal reached new heights when the public learned of Interior Minister Petkov's meetings with the notorious Galevi brothers, alleged to be among the country's drug trafficking bosses. Petkov said the meeting was "necessary in order to protect public interests" which, according to media speculation, involved brokering a peace deal between warring organized crime groups on the eve of Bulgaria's EU accession in January 2007. Political pressure finally forced Petkov's resignation, though he remains an influential figure in the

Parliament and in the ruling Socialist Party.

¶4. (C) As you visit Bulgaria you will find a new, honest Interior Minister, Mihail Mikov, who is eager to undertake reforms. Prior to his appointment as minister, Mikov served as the leader of the Socialist parliamentary group. Mikov was appointed to head the scandal-ridden ministry because of his consensus-oriented approach, untainted reputation and experience with legislation related to the MOI and the security services.

¶5. (C) Mikov has turned to the U.S. for assistance as he seeks to reform this troubled ministry. Bulgarian law enforcement agencies, investigators, prosecutors and judges continue to require further assistance to develop the capacity to investigate, prosecute and adjudicate illicit narcotics trafficking and other serious crimes effectively. Following the scandals involving the MOI leadership, regular police officers are demoralized and even more vulnerable to being lured into corruption. Their colleagues in Customs, frustrated by the recent controversial appointments at the top of the agency, share similar feelings. Our message is that the U.S. wants an Interior Ministry that has the confidence of the Bulgarian public and its international partners. The MOI needs more and better paid/qualified investigating officers, clear lines of authority within the Ministry, clear division of responsibility between MOI and the recently established State Agency for National Security (DANS) and strengthened cooperation between law enforcement and the judiciary. We are ready to offer expert advice and technical assistance, as we gauge the Interior Ministry's capacity for absorbing it.

Karagiannis